

COUNTERPUNCH

This is Evil, Not the Banality of Evil!

By *Melvin Goodman*

On March 11, 2026



Photograph Source: Dan Scavino – Public Domain

“There is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. It’s the only thing that can stop me, and that’s very good.”

– Donald Trump, January 2026, In response to a question regarding checks that remained on how he exercised power on the world stage.

Sixty-three years ago, Hannah Arendt coined the concept of the “banality of evil,” describing Holocaust organizer Adolf Eichmann as disturbingly normal rather than a monstrous fanatic. Arendt didn’t mean that Eichmann was not evil, but that he was a small and ordinary man with an “inability to think for himself.” She found a “depthless ordinariness” in Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem, which accounted for the provocative term of “banality.”

Today, we are watching Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu conduct a war that is evil. There

is no banality to be observed. They are not ordinary people. They are evil.

Netanyahu's rhetoric over the years has been Islamophobic. Prior to a trip to Germany in 2015, he charged a former Muslim elder in Jerusalem with convincing Adolf Hitler to exterminate the Jews. Netanyahu said that, at the time, Hitler wanted to "expel the Jews," but not exterminate them. He appeared to be absolving Hitler of the murder of six million Jews in order to lay the blame on Muslims.

Trump's relationship with Muslims has also been a defining and controversial aspect of his political career. Shortly after taking office in 2017, Trump signed an executive order banning citizens from several predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States. The so-called "Muslim ban" caused massive disruptions that separated families and halted visa processing of thousands of people. Previously, he promoted false claims about Muslims celebrating the attacks on 9/11. There have been surges in hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims in both terms of Trump's presidency.

Prior to the two attacks on Iran this year, the Israelis and the Americans combined to conduct genocidal attacks on two million Palestinians in Gaza. With U.S. complicity during the Biden and Trump presidencies, the Israeli Defense Forces intentionally and systematically destroyed Palestinian people and their history and culture. The campaign involved mass killing, starvation, and destruction of infrastructure. In 2023, South Africa formally accused Israel with genocide in the International Court of Justice, a charge supported by numerous countries.

A leading Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem, has charged the IDF with ethnic cleansing and a "forcible displacement" of Palestinians on a "huge scale." B'Tselem warned that genocidal activity will expand to additional areas where Palestinians live under Israeli occupation, and currently we are witnessing examples of ethnic cleansing in the West Bank. Right-wing Israeli politicians are calling for expelling Palestinians from Israel itself, although they hold Israeli citizenship.

Trump and Netanyahu are now joined in a war against Iran that will punish Iranian women and children. Only days after British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that his government would not cooperate in an offensive war against Iran, B-1 and B-52 bombers arrived at British airfields that appeared to represent the first stage in the "big hits" that Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth have been promising. Starmer is now saying that the U.S. Air Force can use British bases for "specific and limited defensive purposes." There are no defensive purposes in this evil U.S.-Israeli war. Furthermore, Iran has no air defense.

Hannah Arendt warned that lies to the people "become the warrant for other lies." Trump and Netanyahu are lying to their people, and there appears to be no end in sight.

Melvin A. Goodman is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and a professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. A former CIA analyst, Goodman is the author of *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA* and *National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism*, and *A Whistleblower at the CIA*. His most recent books are "American Carnage: The Wars of Donald Trump" (Opus Publishing, 2019) and "Containing the National Security State" (Opus Publishing, 2021). Goodman is the national security columnist for [counterpunch.org](https://www.counterpunch.org).

Article printed from CounterPunch.org: <https://www.counterpunch.org>

URL to article: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2026/03/11/this-is-evil-not-the-banality-of-evil/>